



Legislative Update

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TAX CREDIT VOUCHERS, CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION AND VIRTUAL EXPANSION

The committee version of SCS/SBs 55, 23 and 25 (O'Laughlin) includes tax credit style vouchers, charter school expansion, full-time virtual school expansion, school board recall provisions, term limits for members of the State Board of Education and home school student participation in MSHSAA activities.

The Association strongly opposes SCS/SBs 55, 23 and 25. The bill could be taken up at any time the Senate is in session, but Senate floor debate has been slowed this week by the absence of a number of Senators who have contracted COVID within the last week. The bill appears likely to be taken up for debate next week. Stay tuned to the MNEA Legislative Update for further information as this bill advances.

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee will hear HB 729 (O'Donnell) on February 2. HB 729 is essentially the same as the voucher, charter school expansion and virtual school expansion portions of SCS/SB 55. The Association also opposes HB 729.

HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES HEAR MORE TAX CREDIT VOUCHER BILLS

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee met on January 26 to hear two tax credit style voucher bills: HB 288 (Christofanelli) and HB 540 (Fitzwater). HB 288 is a companion bill to SB 23 and the voucher portion of SB 25. HB 540 is a tax credit style voucher that puts some program administration under the control of the State Treasurer.

The Senate Education Committee met on January 26 to hear SB 30 (Cierpiot), a companion bill to HB 540.

Missouri NEA opposes these and similar proposals to divert public funds to private schools not subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, staff and parents as apply to public schools.

The House committee also heard HB 288 (Basye) to allow parents of special education students to make audio recordings of IEP meetings and 504 plan meetings with prior notice.

HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARS CHARTER FUNDING BILL

The House Budget Committee met on January 26 to hear HB 137 (Richey). HB 137 would revise the law specifying payments to charter schools and shift more local school funds to charter schools. The Association opposes the bill.

The Association believes that charter schools should be sponsored by and accountable to the local community through the elected school board and approved only after an impact study is conducted by the district to consider the proposal. Charter schools should be subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, parents and staff as are applicable to traditional public schools.

The Association also urges the legislature to provide an allowance in the calculation of charter school funding for maintaining district capacity to serve all students. Even charter school students rely on the district to remain capable to serve all students, especially in the case that one or more charter or district schools close. Funding should also be provided to maintain the other functions needed at the district level.

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Governor Mike Parson delivered the State of the State Address to a joint session of the House and Senate on January 27. The legislature decided to change the location to the Senate chamber based on better opportunities for social distancing of attendees. The State of the State address gives the Governor a chance to present his vision for the state and his budget priorities.

Governor Parson mentioned some of his funding proposals, including several suggested increases for education:

\$8.5 M to ensure full funding of the K-12 funding formula,
\$8.4 M for early childhood special education,
\$4.4 M to develop a comprehensive literacy program using federal grant funds,
\$13 M for the A+ Schools scholarship program,
\$750 K for more students to take the ACT WorkKeys and Career Readiness Assessment, and
\$67.5 M in core funding for four-year colleges and universities.

Governor Parson also enumerated his top three priorities for the legislature to address:

- 1) COVID liability waivers for healthcare entities, manufacturers and property owners,
- 2) Collecting state and local sales taxes for online and remote sales, as allowed by the Wayfair decision of the US Supreme Court, and
- 3) Increasing the cash operating reserve fund used to sustain the state budget and operating expenditures through the fiscal year.

GOVERNOR CREATES OFFICE OF CHILDHOOD

Governor Parson announced, on January 28, his plan to consolidate several early childhood programs across three state agencies into a single Office of Childhood. The new office will be housed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and provide a comprehensive agency for early childhood care and education, including all state programs related to childcare, home visiting, early learning, and early intervention. The office will include relevant programs and staff from DESE, the Department Health and Senior Services (DHSS), and the Department of Social Services (DSS).

The Office of Childhood will consist of approximately 145 state employees across the state. Current funding will remain unchanged for the programs involved as well as private childcare providers and public schools. The Office of Childhood will have an estimated Fiscal Year 2022 budget of approximately \$660 million.

Governor Parson today signed an Executive Order officially establishing the new office, which will take effect on August 28, 2020, unless disapproved by the state legislature within 60 days.

EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS

The House Appropriations - Education Committee met on January 26 to hear testimony from higher education institution presidents and fiscal officers. The committee also heard a presentation from the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development. The presentation included an organizational overview of the various programs of the Department.

The committee met again on January 28 to hear testimony from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Commissioner Vandeven spoke briefly and answered questions. Committee questions and comments centered on the Department's plan to continue with MAP state assessments this school year. The committee also heard public testimony regarding DESE appropriations, including sheltered workshop and early childhood programs.

COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING

The Senate Education Committee also heard two other bills on January 26:

SB 33 (Arthur) regarding competency based education. The bill creates a task force to study and develop competency-based education programs in public schools and a grant program to fund to school districts for the purpose of providing competency-based education programs. The Association supports the bill.

SB 34 (Arthur) regarding an alternative graduation pathway for high school students. The bill allows an alternative diploma to be earned as early as the tenth grade, based upon demonstration skills and knowledge in core subject areas and satisfactory performance on examinations in subjects needed to prepare a student to enter postsecondary education without remedial or

developmental coursework. The bill includes alternative funding provisions for the district, depending on whether the student remains enrolled after earning the alternative diploma or enrolls in postsecondary education.

LOCAL CONTROL OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

The House Special Committee on Small Business met on January 26 to hear a number of bills pertaining to local control of public health measures, including HB 75 (Murphy), HB 288 (Henderson), HB 392 (Kelley), HB 444 (McGill), HB 572 (Haffner) and HB 602 (Grier). The Association believes that every child should have a safe place to learn. The Association urges the committee to ensure that any such legislation maintain an effective structure in place, where local and state public health officials can take appropriate and timely action to adopt and enforce provisions to help ensure students have safe schools.

HOUSE PASSES SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE

The House voted to approve HCS/HB 16 (Smith) on January 28. The bill contained a single appropriation of \$324.7 M in federal stimulus funds to the Missouri Housing Development Commission to fund emergency rental assistance. The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

HOUSE PENSIONS COMMITTEE

The committee met on January 27 to hear HB 29 (Walsh). The bill would include the salary information for employees of public retirement systems, including the staff of the PSRS and PEERS Systems, on the government accountability portal.

COUNTY SALES TAX FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee met on January 27 to hear SB 47 (Hough) to authorize, among several provisions, a countywide sales tax in Greene County or a citywide sales tax in Springfield to fund early childhood education. If the tax is approved, the county or city governing body will select an existing community task force to administer the funds. The funds would be expended upon approval from the community task force in accordance with a budget approved by the county or city governing body.

PHOTO ID MANDATE

The House Elections and Elected Officials Committee met on January 27 to hear HB 334 (Simmons) regarding photo ID requirements. The bill will require voters, including those voting absentee at the office of the election authority, to provide a government-issued photo identification or vote a provisional ballot that will only count if the voter returns later the same day with a government-issued photo ID or the election authority verifies the signature of the voter against the signature on file. Missouri NEA opposes barriers that keep eligible citizens from voting and being politically active and opposes HB 334.

SENATE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

The committee hearing scheduled for January 28 was cancelled. The committee was scheduled to hear two bills:

SB 22 (Koenig) regarding tax increment finance (TIF) projects. The bill would better define and focus the situations where TIFs can apply and ensure that a third party does the evaluation of whether the proposed project meets those definitions, rather than the developers. The Association supports the bill.

SB 24 (Eigel) to permanently eliminate 99.997% of the taxes on personal property within a five year period. by phasing out. Based on the official fiscal note for the bill, this change is expected to ultimately reduce local school revenues by roughly \$1 billion per year. The Association opposes the bill.

CONNECT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS AS AN MNEA EDUCATION ADVOCATE!

You're the expert! Tell legislators how legislation would affect you, your students, and your schools. As an educator, you're already knowledgeable about the resources and support students and your colleagues need.

You can help create a better future and support MNEA's legislative effort by becoming an MNEA Education Advocate. Due to the global pandemic, MNEA will not hold the regular schedule of in-person Legislative Forums and Capitol Action Days this year. Instead, MNEA EA's will join virtual back-home visits to connect with their elected officials.

Sign up now to receive training and support to connect with your elected official as an MNEA Education Advocate by visiting <https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/VolunteerActionCard.aspx>

USEFUL LINKS

MNEA Issues and Action: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/Issues-Action.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Action Center: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/LegislativeActionCenter.aspx>

MNEA Education Advocates Program (includes signup):

<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PoliticalActionProgram.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Updates (includes signup):

<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/StateLegislativeUpdates.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Platform and Priorities:

<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PlatformPriorities.aspx>

MNEA App: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/News/Download-the-Missouri-NEA-Mobile-App-Today-413.aspx>

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